

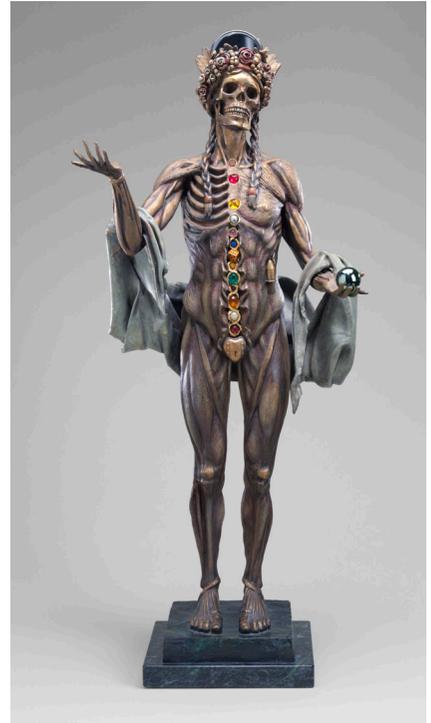
Audrey Flack

GARY SNYDER GALLERY

It was at once fun and awe-inspiring to see how Audrey Flack deploys nearly every trick in the sculpture book to claim (mainly) bronze figurative tradition for women. This clean, well-installed exhibition included her wildly patinated bronzes, from small figures to giant heads, with references ranging from painted classical sculpture to Donatello (especially his Mary Magdalen), from the Art Deco designer Erté to Jean-Léon Gérôme.

Flack's subjects are all women, including herself, and often riff on allegorical roles traditionally assigned to women. There were here allegories meant to inspire, such as *American Athena* (1989), a blue-green and gilded goddess who floats with arms half-raised and an eagle as a headdress, and *Victory* (1990), with farm animals and dolphins and soldiers tucked into her drapery along with a cannonball. Then there were the ethnic embodiments, such as *Medicine Woman* (1989) and *Black Medicine* (1981–82), evoking ethnological models such as those of the 20th-century sculptor Malvina Hoffmann. And there was Flack's 1994 maquette for *Queen Catherine of Braganza*, the large sculpture that was slated for the waterfront in New York's borough of Queens (named for the queen, wife of King Charles II of England), which was ultimately rejected due to the royal couple's possible involvement in the slave trade. The figure, with her flowing dress, corkscrew curls, and jeweled front would have been a scenic addition to New York's public-art presence. Also bejeweled, and an indication of the artist's reaction to the fracas, was a powerful half-skeleton, half-flayed standing figure with braids, *Sofia (Vanitas)*, 1995, shrugging and holding tattered drapery, a heart-shaped lock at her pubic area.

The more recent *Self-Portrait as St. Teresa* (2012) shows the artist with tears and almost manga-style bangs. A pistol and paint tubes shoot streams of metallic colored paint over this former photorealist painter's head, with the streams turning into curly hair. It is the best allegory yet, with its roses, paintbrush, and tiara of stars. This exhibition of fearless work inspired applause and high fives for showcasing Flack's defiant and sometimes winking appropriation of the ups and downs of figurative sculpture.



Sofia (Vanitas), 1995, patinated and gilded bronze, 27 x 11 x 11"

—Cynthia Nadelman